



A Unique Copy of Leaves of Grass, 1882

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A UNIQUE COPY OF *LEAVES OF GRASS*, 1882

As has been recounted elsewhere, in May 1882, James R. Osgood of Boston, rather than face prosecution for circulating an alleged "obscene" book withdrew as publisher of the 1881 sixth edition of *Leaves of Grass*, and turned over the plates (and probably some printed sheets) to Whitman. Subsequently that same year, before the book was republished by Rees Welsh of Philadelphia, the poet had a special issue of about one hundred copies made up as the "Author's Edition," Camden, N.J., 1882.¹ A copy of this issue is in the library of the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis. Although it was briefly noted and described generally when the Society acquired it,² the book's several added-on features make it unique, and warrant a detailed report.

The copy was presented to the Society in 1960 by Mary Lackland Taylor (1872–1966) of St. Louis, a close friend of Jessie Louisa Whitman, the poet's then only surviving niece.³ The book is inscribed in Whitman's hand, in black ink on the front free endpaper: "Mrs. Taylor / St. Louis / from her friend / the author / November / 1883." The Mrs. Taylor of Whitman's inscription was Mary's mother, Frances ("Fannie") Taylor (1846–1907), from whom she inherited the book. Fannie Taylor was a daughter of Rufus J. Lackland, a long-term president (39 years) of the Boatmen's Savings Institution, today's Boatmen's National Bank of St. Louis. Her husband was Theodore Thompson Taylor (1833–1899), a civil engineer at one time associated with the St. Louis Water Department.⁴

It is likely that Theodore Taylor's profession was the link originally connecting the Taylor and Whitman families. Walt's brother, Thomas Jefferson ("Jeff") Whitman, had gone out to St. Louis from Brooklyn in 1867 to be the chief engineer in charge of building a new waterworks for the city, and was later St. Louis water commissioner.⁵ In these capacities he must surely have been acquainted with Taylor, who lived, moreover, in the same St. Louis area, at 1810 Olive Street, only six blocks away from Jeff's home at 2316 Pine. It is fair to assume, then, that their wives would have known each other, and that when Jeff's wife Martha died in 1873,⁶ Fannie Taylor would take a helpful interest in his two children, Mannahatta ("Hattie"), 13, and Jessie Louisa, 10.

Theodore Taylor was originally from Philadelphia and was a member of one of that city's old families. It is probable that Fannie Taylor stayed over with her widowed mother-in-law, Mrs. Joseph Taylor, when she went east to visit the 1876 International Exhibition (the "Philadelphia Centennial"), and, as previous scholarship suggests, to escort home to St. Louis the now 16-year-old Hattie and 13-year-old Jessie Louisa after their long visit with their Uncles George and Walt in Camden. On that occasion she, and undoubtedly the two girls, took the ailing "half-paralytic" poet across the river to the Exhibition, as Whitman recorded in his daybook, under the blue-pencilled heading, "The Centennial Exposition / Phila.":

'76 [wide space] 25 / Oct 24—was taken by / Mrs Fannie L Taylor, / (1810 Olive street St Louis Missouri) / to the Exposition—the 2 1/2 hours there / wheel'd about in the chair—the Japanese / summer-house—the figure of Carlyle— / —the visit to the Annex—the statuary— / the crowd—the delightful ride along the / Schuylkill, evening ⁷

The next year, in May, Whitman saved Mrs. Taylor's address on a slip of paper in his daybook,⁸ and two years later, in August 1879, just before setting out on his jaunt to Missouri, Kansas, and Colorado, he recorded it again.⁹ Finally, in his notebook for that trip, under the date of 28 November 1879 during a three-months' visit with Jeff and his nieces, he once more jotted down Fannie's name and now fairly nearby address.¹⁰ This suggests that in St. Louis he renewed his acquaintance with this family friend.

The copy of the 1882 *Leaves of Grass* inscribed to Fannie Taylor fits the usual descriptions of that issue. It is a book of 20½ cm bound in dark green cloth, with the top edges of the pages in gilt. The backstrip is lettered in gilt: "Author's / Edition / Leaves / of / Grass / complete / Autograph / & / portraits / 1882." The front and back endpapers are glossy yellow. The title-page has the nine-line poem beginning, "Come, said my Soul," with Whitman's autograph in black ink just below, and is imprinted: "AUTHOR'S EDITION / CAMDEN, NEW JERSEY / 1882." On the verso of the title-page is Whitman's name with an 1881 copyright notice. The book is paged 3–382, and has two portraits of Whitman (both with tissue guards), one opposite p. 29, the other opposite p. 296. The former is the familiar likeness of the first edition; the latter is of Whitman in his fifties.¹¹

What is exceptional about the Society's copy is the variety of material added to the book after 1883, the year of the inscription. Of special interest are nine printed poems Whitman evidently sent Fannie Taylor, which she then pasted or pinned in the volume. All have Whitman's name printed after the verses. All are either magazine or newspaper clippings, and apparently first publications, of poems that appeared in 1887 or 1888, poems which with one exception became part of the "Sands at Seventy" annex to the 1888 *Leaves*:

- 1) "You Lingering Sparse Leaves of Me," 5 ll. pasted inside the front cover (*Lippincott's Magazine*, November 1887).¹²
- 2) "Paumanok," 5 ll. with printed heading, "To the Editor of the Herald," pasted inside the front cover (*New York Herald*, 29 February 1888).
- 3) "From Montauk Point," 5 ll. with printed heading, "To the Editor of the Herald," pasted inside the front cover (*New York Herald*, 1 March 1888).
- 4) "As I Sit Writing Here," 4 ll. with printed heading in brackets, "Written for the Herald," attached by a straight pin to the top of p. 132 (*New York Herald*, 14 May 1888). Has the misspelling "querilities" for "querulities" in the second line.
- 5) "Shakspeare-Bacon's Cipher," with subtitle in parentheses, "A Hint to Scientists," 6 ll. with heading in Whitman's hand in ink, "Pub'd in N Y *Cosmopolitan* / Oct 1877," pasted on the verso [p. 384] of a blank page (*Cosmopolitan*, October 1887—Whitman is in error about the year). In the third line the poet corrected in ink a typographical error, "anthor," to "author." This poem is the exception, the only one that did not become part of the "Sands at Seventy" annex, but was eventually included, instead, in the annex, "Good-Bye My Fancy."
- 6) "Going Somewhere," 8 ll. in quotation marks, with heading in Whitman's hand in ink, "Pub'd in Nov. Lippincott's," pasted sideways on the recto of the last leaf [p. 385] (*Lippincott's Magazine*, November 1887).

7) "Yonnonidio," 12 ll. with two sentences in brackets explaining the term, with heading in Whitman's hand in ink, "Pub'd in N Y *Critic* / Nov. 26," pasted on the inside of the back cover (*The Critic*, 26 November 1887).

Two other poems are pasted on the recto of a leaf, now loose, belonging just ahead of the title page.

8) "Twilight," 3 ll. with heading in Whitman's hand in ink, "Pub'd in Dec: *Century*" (*The Century*, December 1887).

9) "The Dying Veteran," 18 ll. headed by the printed note in brackets, "A Long Island incident—early part of the present century" (*McClure's Magazine*, June 1887).

The volume yields further glimpses of its reader (or possibly its author) by way of numerous check marks that call attention to various poems. The marks, frequently pencilled X's, appear in the table of contents and in the text itself. Poems thus singled out are: "Beat! Beat! Drums!" "Cavalry Crossing a Ford," "Come Up From the Fields Father," all four "Memories of President Lincoln" poems, "Old Ireland," "The Singer in the Prison," "A Riddle Song," and "The Sobbing of the Bells."

After Whitman's death in 1892 two further additions to the book were made. Pasted in the text over the "Drum-Taps" heading on p. 219 is a thrice-folded newspaper clipping—a long, single-column story from the St. Louis *Republic* of 31 March 1892. It is headlined, "Walt Whitman's Burial / Thousands Gather Around / The Dead Poet's Tomb. / Colonel Ingersoll's Eloquent and Impressive / Tribute to the Memory of the / 'Good Gray Poet' at / The Grave." After quoting Ingersoll at length, the story ends with the closing words of his eulogy, "I love him still."

The final addition was of a postcard lightly pasted to the verso of the loose leaf mentioned above. On the front of the card is an 1880 photograph of Whitman, with the caption, "Walt Whitman, 'The Good Gray Poet' / Born May 31, 1819, Died March 26, 1892." The back of the card has printed sideways, along the left edge, "Photo by PEL-CAM System, Camden, N.J.," and in the left-side message section are printed five lines from the fifth part of "Song of the Open Road," beginning, "All seems beautiful to me." The postcard has no stamp, was never mailed, and in the address section has the pencilled note, "Jess thought this / the best picture / of Uncle Walt / M T."¹³

These mementoes and the other additions make the Missouri Historical Society's copy of the 1882 *Leaves of Grass* remarkably personal. Indeed, the accumulated features—from inscription to commemorative photograph—give surpassing value to Whitman's designation, "Author's Edition."

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NOTES

1 For the history of this issue see Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass: A Textual Variorum of the Printed Poems*, edited by Sculley Bradley [and others] (New York: New York University

Press, 1980), I, Introduction, pp. xxii–xxiii; or, perhaps more conveniently, William White, “Editions of *Leaves of Grass*: How Many?” *Walt Whitman Review*, 19 (September 1973), 113.

2 “Whitman Family Papers,” *Missouri Historical Society Bulletin*, 16 (July 1960), 365–366.

3 The book is marked in ink on the front free endpaper, “Property of Mary Taylor.” As executrix for Jessie Louisa Whitman, who died in 1957, Mary Taylor had been instrumental in having a collection of Whitman family letters presented to the Missouri Historical Society in 1959. See Edwin Haviland Miller, “New Letters of Walt Whitman,” *Missouri Historical Society Bulletin*, 16 (January 1960), 99–100.

4 For information about the Taylor family I draw mainly on letters of 11 May 1981, and 17 November 1981, received from Edgar Lackland Taylor, grandson of Theodore and Frances Taylor. I thank Mr. Taylor for his helpful and cordial responses to my inquiries. I also wish to acknowledge letters of assistance from the Bellefontaine Cemetery Association, St. Louis, 12 December 1980, and 3 April 1981; and from the History and Genealogy Department of the St. Louis Public Library, 8 December 1981.

5 *Mattie: The Letters of Martha Mitchell Whitman*, edited by Randall H. Waldron (New York: New York University Press, 1977), Introduction, p. 2; Appendix B, p. 94. For Jeff as “Water Commissioner,” see, for instance, the news account, “Crystal City,” *St. Louis Daily Globe-Democrat*, 7 November 1879, p. 2.

6 *Mattie*, Introduction, p. 4.

7 Walt Whitman, *Daybooks and Notebooks*, edited by William White (New York: New York University Press, 1978), *Daybooks, 1876–November 1881*, 1:47. See also Walt Whitman, *The Correspondence*, edited by Edwin Haviland Miller (New York: New York University Press, 1964), 3:68–69, n. 14.

8 *Daybooks and Notebooks*, 1:57. The address, not in Whitman’s hand, erroneously gives “Ohio” for Olive Street.

9 *Daybooks and Notebooks*, 1:153.

10 *Daybooks and Notebooks*, 1:161.

11 The second portrait can be viewed in Arthur Gilman [and others], *Poets’ Homes* (Chicago and Boston: The Interstate Publishing Co., 1879), opposite p. 56, where it is captioned, “Walt Whitman at Fifty-Three.” For a description of the issue, see Carolyn Wells and Alfred F. Goldsmith, *A Concise Bibliography of the Works of Walt Whitman* (1922; rpt. Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1965), pp. 25–26. Wells and Goldsmith, however, cite the two portraits as on pages 29 and 297; in the copy here described the portraits are, as stated, opposite p. 29 (introducing “Song of Myself”) and opposite p. 296 (with its poem, “Out from Behind This Mask,” subtitled in parentheses, “To Confront a Portrait”). They also indicate that the words “complete” and “portraits” on the backstrip are capitalized, whereas here they are in lower case, as on the copy in the Berg Collection at the New York Public Library—see *Walt Whitman’s Leaves of Grass: A Centenary Exhibition . . .*, compiled by Lewis M. Stark and John D. Gordan (New York: The New York Public Library, 1955), p. 35.

12 Here and in subsequent parentheses I indicate the place and date of first publication as given in Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, Comprehensive Reader’s Edition, edited by Sculley Bradley and Harold W. Blodgett (1965; rpt. New York: W. W. Norton, 1973).

13 The photograph, identified as Saunders #159, can be viewed in Walt Whitman, *Specimen Days* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1971); it is also the frontispiece of the writer’s *Walt Whitman’s*

Western Jaunt (Lawrence, Kansas: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1981). I thank the Society's Director of Archives for detaching (on 16 October 1980) the postcard from the loose leaf to which it had been only partially pasted.

WHITMAN IN *THE SOUTHERN LITERARY MESSENGER*

Walt Whitman did not go unnoticed in *The Southern Literary Messenger*. In three different issues, the "Editor's Table" section of the magazine once edited by Edgar Allan Poe made Whitman the subject of ridicule.¹ The July 1860 number carefully reprinted Whitman's "Longings for Home" (later titled "O Magnet South") from the 1860 edition of *Leaves of Grass*. This, apparently, was the poem's second printing.² But the action was not a friendly one. George W. Bagby, the gifted humorist, raconteur, and staunch Southern patriot who assumed the editorial helm of the *Messenger* in June 1860, used his introductory comments to lash out against Whitman, Emerson (note the allusion to *Representative Men*), and all Northern literature:

The pantheism of Theodore Parker and Ralph Waldo Emerson, pervades and pollutes the entire literature of the North. It is nowhere more apparent than in that clumsy romance, "The Marble Faun." It culminates in the spasmodic idiocy of Walt Whitman. The smart scribblers who compose the better part of the Northern literati, are all becoming infected with the new leprosy—Whitmansy. This latest "representative man" of the North has his imitators by the hundred, his admirers by the thousand, and an organ—the slang-whanging paper called *The Saturday Press*. A specimen of the twangling-jack style of Whitman is given below. Take a pair of frog-legs, put a tongue to every toe of both legs, and place the legs under a galvanic battery—and you have the utterings of Whitman. In the following slosh [i.e., "Longings for Home"], Whitman says he "grew up" in Virginia. We should feel mean if this statement were anything else than a Whitmaniacal license, accent on the first vowel in license. Here is the sample of his obnubilate, incoherent, convulsive flub-drub.

When a reader protested that "Longings for Home" was a pretty good poem, Dr. Bagby demolished the upstart, in the August 1860 number, in a style reminiscent of Mark Twain's lampoons of rambunctious antebellum journalism:

"The Writer," writing from New York, tells us that he "liked Walt Whitman's 'Longings for Home' very much." We appreciate the information. He tells us further, that "Ossian's poetry is something in the style of Whitman's." Only remotely and feebly, we consider. The Bible, also, is "something in the style of the Book of Mormon." Also, paste is "something in the style" of the diamond. Also, the goose is "something in the style" of the swan. Also, "The Writer" is "something in the style" of the goose, and we doubt not the imitation is a close and successful one. . . .

In the January 1862 number, the "Editor's Table" printed a 68-line parody of Whitman's verse entitled "The War"; it was prefaced by Dr. Bagby's remarks, as follows: